



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Experiencing and sharing God's love to transform our homes, community and world.

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THE LIGHT SHINES

"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:9-13)

We are about halfway through the Christian season of Epiphany. Epiphany begins on January 6 and runs up to Ash Wednesday (March 2 this year). I've long been fascinated with the wisdom the early church showed in the development of the Christian calendar, particularly in regard to this season — putting it in the middle of the darkest time of the year. Philip Reinders explains, "We know the word: a moment of piercing awareness, the sudden jolt of understanding. Imagine, then, that moment stretched out over a period of time. This is the season of Epiphany, a season celebrating the revelation of the Savior, the light of the world."



This year seems particularly dark, doesn't it? We're almost two years into this pandemic, and we're seeing numbers of infections that are higher than we've ever seen. Vaccinated or not, masked or not, it seems everyone is catching it. Thanks to the weather and the pandemic, our children have been home more than they've been in school. Our economy seems to be a mess. The political tensions on the local, state, and national levels are stretched tighter than ever before. Internationally, we are sitting on the brink of war with Russia, a statement that frankly my mind struggles to wrap itself around. After a childhood growing up in the Cold War and worrying about nuclear war with the USSR, I thought we put that to rest in the early 90s.

These things are bad, and they are worrying. Put together with the long nights of this time of year, and the darkness almost takes on a more visceral sense. That's where the brilliance of the season of Epiphany comes in. As Paul writes in Ephesians 6, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12) The real battle, the real threat, isn't physical; it isn't anything listed in the above paragraph at all. The real threat, the real darkness, is the spiritual darkness that envelops this world. The only thing that can stop or defeat that darkness is the Light of the World, Jesus Christ. And He has already done so, the darkness just doesn't know it yet. As John proclaims at the beginning of his Gospel, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

The wonder of Epiphany isn't just that the Light of the World has come and that the darkness cannot overcome Him, but that when we receive Him, we become children of God. And when we become children of God, we also become the light of the world. As Jesus says, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14–16). The closer we draw to Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, the more brightly our light shines, and the more the darkness is diminished in and around us. This season of Epiphany is a reminder for us to focus on the Light, to draw closer to the Light, to be warmed by the Light, knowing and trusting that as we do so, the Light of God's love and truth will shine through us into the world around us. Over the course of the rest of this month, be intentional in seeking the Light of Christ and letting your light shine to others.

"For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus 'sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:5–6).

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

2022 February Youth Ministry News & Info

Sundays from 6:30-7:45 p.m.

Where did the idea of "finding the one" come from in the first place? If having that idea looming over you while dating in high school seems like a lot of pressure...that's because it is! So, what if dating in high school wasn't that high-stakes? Instead, what if dating in high school could be more about who you're becoming, and less about finding your "one"? In this 4-week series—for those who are currently dating and those who aren't—we focus on how **becoming** the one is better than **finding** the one, fighting unhealthy obsession, and dealing with breakups. This series challenges students to pick their perspective when it comes to dating and disappointment.

February 13: SUPER BOWL LVI PARTY @ THE GARRISONS

February 20: Becoming the one is better than finding the one.

February 27: Don't let anyone become your everything.

March 6: A breakup doesn't have to break you.

March 13: You pick your perspective.



Life Together

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS:

3 Janel Babcock



FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT

GENERAL FUND

December 2021 Y-T-D

Income	11,875	201,008
Expenses	<u>10,606</u>	<u>129,472</u>
Balance	1,269	71,536



Tithes & Offering Envelopes

For those of you who use the dated Tithes & Offering envelopes for your offering, your set for 2022 is in the foyer. Please pick them up to begin using in January. If you have not been using the boxed set of offering envelopes, but would like to, please ask in the office for a set. These envelopes are a good way to keep up with your offering and they are helpful for our record keeping as well.

Contributions Statements

Your CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT for the year 2021 has been e-mailed or mailed. If you have a question, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the Treasurer, Vonnice Rucker, at treasurer@npcmh.com or 434-439-2824. Thank you sincerely for your dedication to Northminster's ministries during 2021.

I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4 NIV

Prayer Requests:



Tim Wright has been diagnosed with stage 3 kidney failure. Tests are being done to determine the best course of treatment.

Sandy Stafford is recovering from COVID.

Cati Hammer, Debbie Moore's daughter, gave birth to James Maverick Hammer on 12/31 at 4:30am. He weighed 9lbs 2oz and was 21" long.

Ray Vandall will be having hip replacement surgery in early February. This was postponed from January.

Caiti & Carlos Vera need prayer as Caiti serves at the University of Pennsylvania. Carlos is currently in California receiving treatment for injuries received while serving in the military.

All medical personnel who have continued serving those with coronavirus in spite of the possibility of getting infected themselves.

Remember others who cannot be with us in church: **Dot Stinnett, Leonard Rowe, and Margaret Watts.**

Our Deepest Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy goes out to Karey Garrison and her family, Pastor David, Peter and Meg, on the passing of her father, Charlie Ford, on Thursday, January 13. While we grieve his absence, we rejoice in the sure hope of Heaven.



Missions, Outreach, and Evangelism Update

Our committee will meet at the church at 6:00 p.m. on February 2.

Gleaning for the World volunteers will meet at the church at 8:30 a.m. on February 17.



Pastor's Midweek Bible Study

Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Join us in person or online for a midweek Bible study with Pastor David as we focus on learning to study the Bible ourselves and apply it to our daily lives. We are currently studying the Book of Hebrews and would love to have you join us. Sign up at <https://npcmh.churchcenter.com/groups/small-groups>

The Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club will meet Thursday, February 10, at 10 a.m. at the home of Sharon Bryant. They are reading *Invisible Child*, by Andrea Elliott.



A Christian RUT may be a GOOD thing

One new venture I have embraced later in life has been running. I don't profess to be athletic or a good runner, but I do enjoy it. I especially like running in the early morning, so that I can experience the transition at morning twilight from night's darkness to the first rays of dawn as the sun just starts to lighten up the sky.

If my running causes me to transition from a sidewalk into grass, I have to look carefully (especially in subdued lighting conditions) for ground that is as flat and solid as possible to keep my footing as stable as possible. (Let me tell you from experience in nighttime running, that it is NO FUN to trip over a hidden concrete storm drain cover, and fall flat on your face. Yes – let's avoid that whenever possible). So my goal is to look for flattened, depressed grass, which is almost always an indicator that people have walked over that area many times, compressing the grass and ground – making that surface safer and easier to run over. So, what does this have to do with any type of spiritual lesson? Well, the flattened, compressed grass I just mentioned could also be described as a RUT.

Usually, the word RUT conjures up negative thoughts – such as suggesting a pattern of thought or behavior we have fallen into that is not good. Whether it's related to eating or exercising or studying or a grumpy disposition or spending habits, there are certainly times we need to assess our situation, pray for the Lord's help, and then begin the process of BREAKING OUT of that RUT.

But – as in the benefit of flattened grass to a runner, there *may* be times when a RUT (or more positively stated – a sustained pattern of behavior) is necessary to help us establish a pattern of behavior that is GOOD for us. For some of us, trying to start of the New Year with some better “habits”, we may find that we actually need to LOOK for a RUT to get into, to help us develop a beneficial type of behavior.

Like it or not, sometimes we have to sort of “force ourselves” to do something over and over (get into a RUT), until that behavior becomes more natural, and until we start to see the benefits of sustaining whatever it is we have started. For example, we may need to “force ourselves” to bypass too many sweets, or “force ourselves” to do a bit of exercise, or “force ourselves” to hold our tongue instead of just saying whatever comes to mind. In all these cases, we may have to get in a RUT – following the same, well-trodden path, until those “drudgeries” come more naturally. At that point, you’re not in a rut anymore, you’re just following a good pattern of behavior.

Although we don’t often like to admit it, we *MAY* have to get in a RUT (force ourselves to follow a pattern) concerning Bible reading in 2022. For many people, it’s something they have told themselves they would do for years, but they “just haven’t gotten around to it” yet. Plenty of other things have seemed more attractive or interesting, and so that Bible reading stuff falls by the wayside.

It may seem sort of unspiritual to think of “forcing” yourself into reading your Bible, but...sometimes climbing into a RUT to establish a pattern may be necessary. And...you’ll be surprised how that RUT will turn into a habit that you begin to enjoy, and then finally begin to look forward to. But...it may have to START as a “RUT” habit.

Eugene Peterson wrote a book called “**A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society**” that addresses this same principle: good things don’t always come instantly; sometimes they are the result of a determined process, that we are persevering in, because we trust it will have benefits that are worth it. In the case of studying God’s Word and learning what He is like and how He operates, the effort is ABSOLUTELY worth it. And...you can be sure that if you start, and are sincere, then the Lord of Heaven and Earth will work in you and with you to make the journey worthwhile.

Whether it’s a few verses to start with, or a bit longer, here’s praying that we all immerse ourselves in God’s Word this coming year. Knowing God’s Word and His perspective on things is the best way to shield ourselves from the panic and angst and depression that seems to take over peoples’ lives so easily, especially when times are hard, as they have been lately. Knowing the One who NEVER PANICS, and can give peace and direction to His children, will be one of the best gifts we can give to ourselves this year. And in the process, hopefully others (especially the unsaved) will witness our confidence in our **Mighty God** (remember the Christmas verses we read in Isaiah 9:6), and will seek Him for themselves. That’s a real WIN-WIN.

Your friend and brother in Christ – Harry

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